

# PARROT & CO

## HAROLD MACGRATH

Author of *The Carpet from Bagdad*,  
*The Place of Honeymoons*, etc.

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### SYNOPSIS.

Warrington, an American adventurer, and James, his servant, with a caged parrot, the trio known as Parrot & Co., are bound for Rangoon to cash a draft for 500,000 rupees. Elsa Chetwood, rich American girl tourist, sees Warrington and asks the purser to introduce her. He tells her that Warrington has beaten a syndicate and sold his oil claims for \$25,000. Warrington puts Rajah, the parrot, through his tricks for Elsa and they pass two golden days together on the river. Martha, Elsa's companion, warns her that there is a kisser in Rangoon. Warrington banks his draft, pays old debts, and overhears an interference in a row over cards.

### CHAPTER VI.

#### In the Next Room.

"Craig?" Warrington whispered the word, as if he feared the world might hear the deadly menace in his voice. For murder leaped up in his heart as flame leaps up in pine kindling.

The weak young man got to his knees, then to his feet. He steadied himself by clutching the back of a chair. With one hand he felt of his throat tenderly.

"He tried to kill me, the blackguard," he croaked.

"Craig, it is you! For ten years I've never thought of you without murder in my heart. Newell Craig, and here, right where I can put my hands upon you! Oh, this old world is small." Warrington laughed. It was a high, thin sound.

The young man looked from his enemy to his deliverer, and back again. What new row was this? Never before had he seen the blackguard with that look in his dark, handsome, predatory face. It typified fear. And who was this big, blond chap whose fingers were working so convulsively?

"Craig," said the young man, "you get out of here, and if you ever come bothering me, I'll shoot you. Hear me?"

This direful threat did not seem to stir the sense of hearing in either of the two men. Suddenly the blond man caught the door and swung it wide.

"Craig, a week ago I'd have throttled you without the least compunction. Today I can't touch you. But get out of here as fast as you can. You might have gone free foremost. Go! Out of Rangoon, too. I may change my mind."

The man called Craig walked out, squaring his shoulders with a touch of bravado that did not impress even the plucked pigeon. Warrington stood listening until he heard the hall door close sharply.

"Thanks," said the bewildered youth. Warrington whirled upon him savagely. "Thanks? Don't thank me, you weak-kneed fool!"

"Oh, I say, now!" the other protested.

"Be silent! If you owe that scoundrel anything, refuse to pay it. He never won a penny in his life without cheating. Keep out of his way; keep out of the way of all men who prefer to deal only two hands." And with this advice Warrington stepped out into the hallway and shut the door rudely.

"Pay the purser and get a box of cigars," Warrington directed James. "Never mind about the wine. I shan't want it now."

James went out upon the errands immediately.

Warrington dropped down in the creaky rocking-chair, the only one in the boarding house. He stared at the worn and faded carpet. How dingy everything looked! What a sordid rut he had been content to lie in! Chance: to throw this man across his path when he had almost forgotten him, forgotten that he had sworn to break the man's neck over his knees! In the very next room! And he had permitted him to go unharmed simply because his mind was full of a girl he would never see again after tomorrow. What was the rascal doing over here? What had caused him to forsake the easy pluckings of Broadway in exchange for a dog's life on packet boats, in a squalid boarding house like this one, and in dismal billiard halls? Wire tapper, racing tout, stool pigeon, a cheater at cards, blackmailer and trafficker in baser things; in the next room, and he had let him go unharmed. Ten years ago and thirteen thousand miles away. In the next room. He laughed unpleasantly. Chivalric fool, silly Don Quixote, sentimental dreamer, to have made a hash of his life in this manner!

He leaned toward the window sill and opened the cage. Rajah walked out, muttering.

When it was possible, Elsa preferred to walk. She was young and strong and active, and she went along

with a swinging stride that made obvious a serene confidence in her ability to take care of herself. What the unknown called willfulness was simply natural independence, which she asserted whenever occasion demanded it.

She loved to prow through the strange streets and alleys and stranger shops; it was a joy to ramble about, minus the irritating importunities of guide or attendant. It was great fun, but it was not always wise. There were some situations which only men could successfully handle. Elsa would never confess that there had been awkward moments when, being an excellent runner, she had blithely taken to her heels.

In her cool, white drill, her wide, white pith helmet, she presented a charming picture. The exercise had given her cheeks a bit of color, and her eyes sparkled and flashed like raindrops. This morning she had taken Martha along merely to still her protests.

"It's all right so long as we keep to the main streets," said the harried Martha, "but I do not like the idea of roaming about in the native quarters. This is not like Europe. The hotel manager said we ought to have a man."

"He is looking out for his commission. Heavens! What is the matter with everybody? One would think, the way people put themselves out to warn you, that murder and robbery were daily occurrences in Asia. I've been here four months, and the only disagreeable moment I have known was caused by a white man."

"Because we have been lucky so far, it's no sign that we shall continue so. And Martha shut her lips grimly. Her worry was not confined to this particular phase of Elsa's imperious moods; it was general. There was that blond man with the parrot. She would never feel at ease until they were out of Yokohama, homeward bound.

"I feel like a child this morning," said Elsa. "I want to run and play and shout."

"All the more reason why you should have a guardian. . . . Look, Elsa! Martha caught the girl by the arm. "There's that man we left at Mandalay coming toward us. Shall we go into this shop?"

"No, thank you! There is no reason why I should hide in a butcher shop simply to avoid meeting the man. We'll walk straight past him. If he speaks we'll ignore him."

"I wish we were in a civilized country."

"This man is supposed to be civilized. Don't let him catch your eye. Go on; don't lag."

Craig stepped in front of them, smiling as he raised his helmet. "This is an unexpected pleasure."

Elsa, looking coldly beyond him, attempted to pass.

"Surely you remember me?"

"I remember an insolent cad," replied Elsa, her eyes beginning to burn dangerously. "Will you stand aside?"

He threw a swift glance about. He saw with satisfaction that none but natives was in evidence.

Elsa's glance roved, too, with a little chill of despair. In stories Warrington would have appeared about this time and soundly trounced this impudent scoundrel. She realized that she must settle this affair alone. She was not a soldier's daughter for nothing.

"Stand aside!"

"Hoity-toity!" he laughed. He had been drinking liberally and was a shade reckless. "Why not be a good fellow? Over here nobody minds. I know a neat little restaurant. Bring the old lady along," with a genial nod toward the quaking Martha.

Resolutely Elsa's hand went up to her helmet, and with a flourish drew out one of the long steel pins.

"Oh, Elsa!" warned Martha.

"Be still! This fellow needs a lesson. Once more, Mr. Craig, will you stand aside?"

Had he been sober he would have seen the real danger in the young woman's eyes.

"Cruel!" he said. "At least, one kiss," putting out his arms.

Elsa, merciless in her fury, plunged the pin into his wrist. It stung like a hornet, and, with a gasp of pain, Craig leaped back out of range, sobered.

"Why, you she-cat!"

"I warned you," she replied, her voice steady and low. "The second stab will be serious. Stand aside."

He stepped into the gutter, biting his lips and straining his uninjured hand over the burning throb in his wrist. He had had wide experience with women. His advantage had always been in the fact that the general

run of them will submit to insult rather than create a scene. This dark-eyed Judith was distinctly an exception to the rule. Gad! She might have missed his wrist and jabbed him in the throat. He swore, and walked off down the street.

Elsa set a gasp which Martha, with her wabbling knees, found difficult to maintain.

"You might have killed him!" she cried breathlessly.

"You can't kill that kind of a snake with a hatpin; you have to stamp on its head. But I rather believe it will be some time before Mr. Craig will again make the mistake of insulting a woman because she appears to be defenseless." Elsa's chin was in the air. The choking sensation in her throat began to subside. "You know and the purser knows what happened on the boat to Mandalay. He was plausible and affable and good looking, and the mistake was mine. I seldom make them. I kept quiet because the boat was full up, and as a rule I hate scenes. Men like that know it. If I had complained he would have denied his actions, inferred that I was evil-minded. Heavens, I know the breed! Now not a single word of this to anyone. Mr. Craig, I fancy, will be the last person to speak of it."

"You had better put the pin back into your hat," suggested Martha.

"Fah! I had forgotten it." Elsa flung the weapon far into the street.

Once they turned into Merchant street, both felt the tension relax. Martha would have liked to sit down, even on the curb.

"I despise men," she volunteered.

"I am beginning to believe that few of them are worth a thought. Those who aren't fools are knaves."

"Are you sure of your judgment in regard to this man Warrington? How can you tell that he is any different from that man Craig?"

"He is different, that is all. This afternoon he will come to tea. I shall want you to be with us. Remember, not a word of this disgraceful affair."

"Ah, Elsa, I am afraid; I am more afraid of Warrington than of a man of Craig's type."

"We are always quarreling, Martha; and it doesn't do either of us any good. When you oppose me I find that that is the very thing I want to do. You haven't any diplomacy."

Warrington's appearance that afternoon astonished Elsa. She had naturally expected some change, but scarcely such elegance. He was, without question, one of the handsomest men she had ever met. He was handsomer than Arthur because he was more manly in type. What a mystery he was! She greeted him cordially, without restraint; but for all that, a little shiver stirred the tendrils of hair at the nape of her neck.

"The most famous man in Rangoon today," she said, smiling.

"So you have read that tommy-rot in the newspaper?"

They sat on her private balcony, under an awning. Rain was threatening. Martha laid aside her knitting and did her utmost to give her smile of welcome an air of graciousness.

"I shouldn't call it tommy-rot," Elsa declared. "It was not chance. It was pluck and foresight. Men who possess those two attributes get about everything worth having."

"There are exceptions," studying the ferrule of his cane.

"Is there really anything you want now and can't have?"

Martha looked at her charge in dread and wonder.

"There is the moon," he answered.

"I have always wanted that. But there it hangs, just as far out of reach as ever."

Elsa's curiosity today was keenly alive. She wanted to ask a thousand questions, but the ease with which the man wore his new clothes, used his voice and eyes and hands, convinced her more than ever that the subtlest questions she might devise would not stir him into any confession. That he had once been a gentleman of her own class, and more, something of an exquisite, there remained no doubt in her mind. What had he done? What in the world had he done?

On his part he regretted the presence of Martha; for, so strongly had this girl worked upon his imagination that he had called with the deliberate intention of telling her everything. But he could not open the gates of his heart before a third person, one he intuitively knew was antagonistic.

Conversation went afield; pictures and music and the polished capitals of the world; the latest books and plays. The information in regard to these Elsa supplied him. They discussed also the problems of the day as frankly as if they had been in an accidental drawing-room. Martha's tea was bitter. She liked Arthur, who was always charming, who never surprised or astonished anybody, or shocked them with unexpected phases of character; and each time she looked at Warrington, Arthur seemed to recede. And when the time came for the guest to take his leave, Martha regretted to find that the major part of her antagonism was gone.

"I wish to thank you, Miss Chetwood, for your kindness to a very lone-

ly. It isn't probable that I shall see you again. I sail next Thursday for Singapore." He reached into a pocket. "I wonder if you would consider it an impertinence if I offered you this old trinket?" He held out the mandarin's ring.

"What a beauty!" she exclaimed. "Of course I'll accept it. It is very kind of you. I am inordinately fond of such things. Thank you. How easily it slips over my finger!"

"Chinamen have very slender fingers," he explained. "Good-by. Those characters say 'Good luck and prosperity.'"

No expressed desire of wishing to meet again; just an ordinary everyday farewell; and she liked him all the better for his apparent lack of sentiment.

"Good-by," she said. She winced, for his hand was rough-palmed and strong.

A little later she saw him pass down the street. He never turned and looked back.

"And why," asked Martha, "did you not tell the man that we sail on the same ship?"

"You're a simpleton, Martha." Elsa turned the ring round and round on her finger. "If I had told him, he would have canceled his sailing and taken another boat."

### CHAPTER VII.

#### Confidences.

That night Martha wrote a letter. During the writing of it she jumped at every sound; a footstep in the hall, the shutting of a door, a voice calling in the street. And yet, Martha was guilty of performing only what she considered to be her bounden duty.

My Dear Mr. Arthur: . . . I do not know what to make of it. His likeness to you is the most unheard of thing. He is a little bigger and broader and he wears his beard longer. That's all the difference. When he came on the boat that night, it was like a hand clutching at my throat. And you know how romantic Elsa is, for all she believes she is prosaic. I am certain that she sees you in this stranger who calls himself Warrington. If only you had had the foresight to follow us, a sailing or two later! And now they'll be together for four or five days, down to Singapore. I don't like it. There's something uncanny in the thing. What if she did forbid you to follow? There are some promises women like men to break. You should have followed.

Neither of us has the slightest idea what the man has done to exile himself in this horrible land for ten years. He still behaves himself like a gentleman, and he must have been one in the past. But he has never spoken of his home, of his past, of his people. We don't even know that Warrington is his name. And you know that's a sign that something is wrong. I wonder if you have any relatives by the name of Warrington? I begin to see that man's face in my dreams.

I am worried. For Elsa is a puzzle. She has always been one to me. I have been with her since her babyhood, and yet I know as little of what goes on in her mind as a stranger would. Her father, you know, was a soldier, of fierce loves and hates; her mother was a hand-some statue. Elsa has her father's scorn for convention and his independence, clothed in her mother's impenetrable mask. Don't mistake me. Elsa is the most adorable creature to me, and I worship her; but I worry about her. I believe that it would be wise on your part to meet us in San Francisco. Give my love and respect to your dear beautiful mother. And marry Elsa as fast as ever you can.

The day of sailing was brilliant and warm. Elsa sat in a chair on the deck of the tender, watching the passengers as they came aboard. A large tourist party bustled about, rummaged among the heaps of luggage, and shouted questions at their unhappy conductor.

She saw Hoogly standing in the bow. A steamer trunk, a kit-bag, a bedding-bag, and the inevitable parrot cage, reposed at his feet. He was watching without interest or excitement the stream passing up and down the gangplank. If his master came, very well; if he did not, he would get off with the luggage. How she would have liked to question him regarding his master! Elsa began to offer excuses for her interest in Warrington. He was the counterpart of Arthur Ellison. He had made his fortune against odds. He was a mystery. Why shouldn't he interest her? Her mind was not ice, nor was her heart a stone. She pitied him, always wondering what was back of it all. She would be in Singapore; after that their paths would widen and become lost in the future, and she would forget all about him, save in a shadowy way. She would marry Arthur whether she loved him or not. She was certain that he loved her. He was, besides, her own sort; and there wasn't any mystery about him at all. He was as clear to her as glass. For nearly ten years she had known him, since his and his mother's arrival in the small pretty Kentucky town. What was the use of hunting a fancy? Yes, she would marry Arthur. She was almost inclined to cable him to meet her in San Francisco.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

#### Stalking Carpathian Stags.

In the Carpathians are to be found the finest stags in Europe, excelling even the Bavarian stags in weight and strength of antler, and far larger than any Highland red deer. When out stalking in Bukovina, in the Carpathians, in September, 1896, Mr. Edward North Buxton shot one of the largest stags ever seen. It carried a head of 18 points, the antlers at their greatest length measuring 52 inches.

## IMMENSE QUANTITY OF WHEAT TIED UP

There Will Still, However, Be a Heavy Deficit of the World's Normal Crop.

A grain expert who has been watching the grain markets and the world's grain fields for a number of years, says:—

"There is at the present time about two billion bushels of wheat, the production of the countries at war, tied up. This is about one-half the world's total production of wheat, which is four billion bushels. One writer argues that, granting that the warring nations produce a one-half crop in the coming year, a deficit of one billion bushels will still be shown. The three countries upon which the filling of this deficit of one billion bushels will rest are the United States, Canada, and Argentina. The combined output of these three countries is only 1,249,000,000, their exportable surplus would of course be much less, so it can easily be seen that the question is not one to be easily solved and it behooves all the above countries to increase their respective productions as much as they possibly can, for when the war is over and trade begins to re-establish itself and the nations undergo a process of rehabilitation, the demand for all breadstuffs will be enormous.

"During the three years following the declaration of peace the farmers of all neutral wheat-producing countries will have ample opportunity to market their wheat at good prices, and it may safely be assumed that the demand will be heavy. Canada has an unusual opportunity in that she has the natural environment for wheat production; she is under the protection of the British flag, and she will not be molested upon the water to any great extent; she can increase her acreage and greatly enhance her production. In other words, she can become a far greater wheat-producing country than she is at the present time."

If the summing-up as made by this expert be correct, is there not the very best reason for the continued effort that is being made by the Government of the Dominion of Canada to secure settlers on the productive vacant lands of the country? Not only are these lands capable of producing high class wheat in large quantities, but cattle, pigs, sheep and horses also do well. The climate is admirably suited. —Advertisement.

#### His Grievance.

A dozen deaf-mutes sat in a north-bound subway train the other night, vigorously conversing along and across the aisle, with gesticulating arms and fingers. The roar of the train was no deterrent to that interchange.

At Grand Central station a man got on plainly overloaded with effective beverage. All the way to Seventy-second street he watched, fascinated, the swift play of hands and fingers. Once he shouted some remark, lost in the racket of the train, and unnoticed, of course, by the deaf-mutes to whom it was addressed.

The doors were closed and the train ready to start from Seventy-second street; there was a bit of silence. In to it the inebriated one broke with an appeal to the guard:

"Conductor! Conductor! I wick!—wish you'd ask those people not to tick!—talk so loud. I can't sleep a wick!—wink." —New York Evening Post.

#### Luxembourg.

Not much has been heard from Luxembourg since the commencement of the European war. Luxembourg, it will be remembered, took a position exactly opposite to that taken by Belgium when the German forces demanded a passage through its territory. It did not oppose, but permitted the march on the ground that the country would not suffer and that all losses would be repaid. It now appears that Luxembourg is suffering and suffering bitterly. It is in the same plight as Belgium and the other day made an appeal to the Belgian relief committee. It only shows that war is war and suffering is inevitable. —St. Louis Times.

#### Supersensitive.

"I am a servant of the people," said the man who is more politic than patriotic.

"I don't like to hear you call yourself a servant," commented Farmer Cornstossel. "As I think of the taxes I pay toward your salary, it makes me feel as if I were up against the tipping evil."

#### Choice of Evils.

Miss Young—I warn you against marrying that man, dear. I'm sure he will lead a double life.

Miss Older—Well, if I don't marry him I'll have to lead a single one and that's worse.